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C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 000986

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR NEA/MAG, NEA/PI

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH PARTY OF PROGRESS AND
SOCIALISM LEADER

REF: A. 04 RABAT 02057
[1](#)B. RABAT 308
[1](#)C. RABAT 719 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Poloff Marcel Martinez for reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION: The Ambassador met May 19
for one hour with Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS)
secretary general Ismail Alaoui at the party's headquarters

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in Rabat. The Ambassador was accompanied by Poloff
(notetaker), while Alaoui was joined by PPS executive
committee member Mustapha Labraimi. This call is a
continuation of the Ambassador's recent round of calls on
political party leaders to discuss party proposals for a
Western Sahara autonomy plan, the impact of the recently
passed political party law, and party plans for the 2007
legislative elections. Commenting on the IRI poll, Alaoui
noted that "certain" media outlets have used the poll for
their own interests, and as a result political parties were
obliged to respond to the Moroccan public opinion. Labraimi
added that despite the results of the poll regarding the
potential PJD strong showing at the polls, the PPS, in
collaboration with their Koutla and Socialist Alliance
partners, is very confident that they will be successful in
[1](#)2007. Alaoui added that, in his opinion, the PJD lacks
honesty and frankness with respect to public opinion.
Commenting on the political party law, Alaoui stressed that
party mergers pose problems for political parties and that he
favors strong alliances over mergers, pointing to the
reported difficulties the Berber UMP is facing in completely
fusing into one single party. END SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION.

IRI Poll: Well Done, But Being Manipulated

[1](#)2. (C) On the International Republican Institute (IRI) poll,
summaries of which appeared in the March 18 issue of Moroccan
French-language weekly Le Journal (reftel b) and which has
continued to generate substantial comment in the Moroccan
press, Alaoui said that "certain" media outlets and
journalists have manipulated the situation to help serve
their own purposes. Alaoui explained that as a result of the
poll's appearance in Le Journal, political parties were
obliged to respond to Moroccan public opinion. He argued
that this resulted in some political parties having to react
and make comments for public consumption, but warned that
these comments should not be read as the true feelings of

political parties. Alaoui believed that IRI had done a good job and did not discredit the techniques used in the poll. He also expressed his party's thanks to IRI for presenting the results to the PPS leadership well in advance of the poll making its public appearance. He explained, however, that he understands how the results can be misconstrued in Morocco. He said Morocco is not yet a culture accustomed to polling (NB: this sentiment was shared by several other political party leaders), adding, "Some people are scared of polling and don't always say what they are really thinking." Alaoui said that, nevertheless, the poll demonstrated to his party that they still have "a lot of work to do," and the PPS needs to better understand the concerns of its constituents.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador highlighted that the poll showed that jobs and unemployment were overwhelmingly the main concern for respondents, and that it was "the government" who was cited as responsible for solving this problem. The Ambassador asked if the PPS had the intention of integrating this concern into their party platform. Alaoui responded that the PPS has proposed several ideas on this topic, but noted that there is a fundamental difference in mentality between Morocco and the United States. Alaoui explained that Morocco has a long history of living under a centralized French system of governance, arguing in fact that Morocco's independence from France did not change this approach, but only served to reinforce this mindset.

¶4. (C) Alaoui continued that the PPS has a two-pronged economic program to help decrease unemployment in Morocco. First, the PPS supports an environment where both the public and private sectors would work in concert to create more jobs, for example by promoting small- to medium-sized enterprises. Second, the PPS believes there should be a convergence of forces between business owners, workers unions and the government to better understand the

fundamental factors causing high unemployment. Alaoui said this approach would be akin to Roosevelt's New Deal programs following the Great Depression. The PPS, according to Alaoui, also recognizes the intellectual deficit Morocco faces and plans to consider proposals that will tackle this deficit. The Ambassador explained and stressed the benefits for Morocco and Moroccan citizens of the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), and Alaoui responded that the PPS fully supports the MCA, as well as the goals of the King's Human Development Initiative (INDH). Alaoui added there is a necessity that jobs created by any program be durable, not jobs that are day-to-day with no stability. The Ambassador also pressed Alaoui on the need for Morocco to regularize the large informal sector.

Eye on 2007?

¶5. (C) Alaoui explained that the PPS party congress April 21-23 was a success, and he was reelected as secretary general of the party. Alaoui said the party is serious about increasing the number of youth and women in the party, a likely effort to increase its base supporters in the run up to the 2007 elections. PPS executive committee member Mustapha Labraimi piped up and said that despite what the IRI poll suggest about the PJD, he has confidence that the Koutla (NB: The Koutla is the "democratic bloc" alliance between the USFP, Istiqlal, and PPS) and the Socialist Alliance (NB: The Socialist Alliance is the parliamentary group including the PPS and Al Ahd) will have a strong showing in 2007. Alaoui, however, explained that the PJD has two factors working in its favor. First, the PJD will continue to enjoy popularity among the masses simply because it is in the opposition. Second, the PJD's ideology is an ideology shared by most Moroccans. However, the PJD lacks honesty and frankness with respect to public opinion, and the PPS does not see an alliance with the PJD in its future, according to Alaoui.

Mergers Pose Problems

¶6. (C) On the recently passed political party law, Alaoui noted that what is really needed is stronger alliances between political parties. Alaoui pointed to the difficulties that the Popular Movement Union (UMP) is reportedly experiencing with their transition from a three-party alliance to a single party. Alaoui explained that mergers pose problems and that smooth fusions are hard to realize. Alaoui argued that the best route is a system of strongly allied parties, where parties would establish a "common action plan" to which people can subscribe or not subscribe. Much like his comments on polling, Alaoui believed that Morocco is not yet ready for complete mergers between political parties, in part because the procedures and rules are not completely understood. Alaoui said, "Unfortunately for Morocco, there is a national paranoia that exists."

¶7. (C) The Ambassador asked what impact the new political party law would have on Moroccan political parties and on the upcoming elections. Alaoui said the new law was not yet being implemented but believed it would have little impact. The Ambassador pressed, asking about the five percent minimum vote requirement. Alaoui responded that the five percent minimum would impact funding for the party but not its legality. He said the PPS would continue to exist even if it did not achieve the five percent threshold in the upcoming election (comment: the IRI poll projects a one percent vote tally for the PPS), a surprisingly naive (or perhaps disingenuous) response.

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